

Ans. No. 1725



Key West 15th Oct 1845

My Dear Sir

I received your letter dated Princeton May 24th but not mailed until Aug 5th yesterday - having been absent on a Botanical Tour to the Maine - otherwise I might have obtained ^{it} 5 or 6 weeks earlier. My change of business ~~does~~ not seem to change my taste. as you express a fear on the contrary judging from the time that I have spent to the total neglect of business - The expense incurred. The hardship endured & the health exposed I think my taste for botany is above fever heat. It is very easy for one to think of making a complete botanical exploration of Florida but it not easy to put in practice. To do this you must make up your mind to wade & swim & crawl. exposed to a heat of from 120 to 140 degrees excepting a few days in the winter your hands well gloved & your face covered with gauze to prevent being devoured by Mosquitoes. For if it is not generally known it is certainly a well established fact in Natural History that these insects have undisputed sway of a large portion of South Florida especially in the neighbourhood of Cape Sable & they are not to be endured for a moment even without some kind of protection - Add to this the drenching rains want of shelter at seasons most favourable to making collections loss of your labour by as is sometimes unavoidable on account of the weather being unfavourable to the curing of them. and you have then some idea of the difficulties to be

encountered. I do not know how soon I shall be able to
do all that you desire but I intend occasionally to make an excursion
as heretofore on the trip which I have just completed I started
with a determination to penetrate to the lake Okechobe but
after spending 6 weeks about the coast rivers, bays of the
everglades & the prairie which terminates the ~~southern~~ peninsula
I found myself completely exhausted being finally seized with
Haemoptysis. I was obliged to abandon the idea of penetrating the
interior at this time. You may think that my description of
South Florida is extravagant. But with the exception of Key West
the whole country to the southward of Tampa Bay containing 19,000
square miles will not for a century hence contain 10,000 inhabitants.
But now to the subject of your letter I have collected the ripe fruit
of the *Butis Mantium* which shall be sent to you by the first vessel
which will be in a few days I will also furnish such information
as regards its habits that may be of service to you. I have examined ^{it} often
It has perplexed me more than any other plant - I doubt if it has any
very close affinity for any thing else - but of this you are more
competent to judge. Of my collections I suppose I may have some 3 or
400 species that I may not have transmitted to you. But many
of these are in a bad condition especially those gathered in my last
trip which from ill health I was unable to secure properly. But
I think that most if not all of them can be made out you shall
if my life is continued get sight of them sometime next June when
I hope my collection will be much augmented. I shall only give you
now some notice of species which have struck me with the most interest
(*Alf. Palmae*) *Coccoloba nucifera* is certainly a native of Florida. I have
found it in many places always near the beach or upon low mangrove
shores or Islands. Another species of *Coccoloba* is probably a native
as I have often observed its fruit which is of much smaller size flowering

About the shores. but have not observed it growing. The Royal Palm of the West Indies I have found growing in all its majesty both upon the eastern & western coasts. another species of palm having something the appearance of the date Palm but with fronds much longer & armed with the most horrid spines. I have not had leisure to ascertain the ~~name~~ ^{name} what it is. but am told that it is common in Mexico. I think that I have now 7 species of Euyenia. one which I discovered on my last trip the proudest of all being a lofty tree of the hammocks with a straight trunk & furnishing a beautiful timber. I cannot at this time give you an account of all. I am in hopes of being able to ^{enable} you to add a new genus to our conifera. I have some strange epidendrous plants & my collections of Graminea & Cyperoidae to me ~~as~~ as I have not paid much attention to those orders are overwhelming. I found them in great variety on prairies & the borders of the everglades. I have quite a variety of ^{plants} plants. a *Pymphen* with yellow nearly inodorous flowers ~~about~~ not so large as those of the *Odorata*. a submersed *Parnassia*. *Utricularia* *Pinguicula* & some to which I am able to give no cognomen. To the *Euphorbiace* I have made some additions - *Turnerace* 3 or 4 species. *Rubiace* I have found but few ^{and of the 19.} *Convolvulace* several. One with tuberous roots in shape size & taste almost precisely like the sweet potatoes but the most splendid flowering vine I ever beheld. The flowers almost precisely the colour of those of the *Labelia* - *Cardinalis* a little deeper if any thing. I found it growing in the rocky barrens near the southern extreme of the peninsula. I brought home some of the tubers & am trying to domesticate them. Of the Order *Eulyceceae* I think I have 2 or 3 sp. Do you remember a succulent leafed jointed vine attached to a stick which I left with you on my visit to Princeton. It belongs to the *Asclepiadeae*. I have since obtained the fruit. - but I cannot find it descried in DeCandolle's *Prodromus* perhaps you can enlighten me. I hope you will retain for me a labelled specimen of all the plants that I have transmitted to you. In my next I will give you something of the geological features of South Florida & its antiquities.

Yours truly - J L Blodgett

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